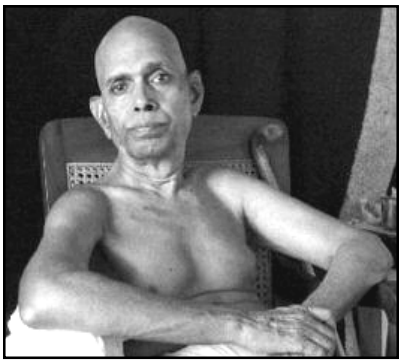

The Maharshi

MAY/JUN 2001 VOL.11, NO. 3

More Than A Dream

By T. P. Ramachandra Aiyer

"Is there any significance in a dream or is it a mere phenomenon?" was the question I put to Sri Bhagavan in writing. In those times, the subjects of 'guru and *sishya*,' of 'initiation and *diksha*' were the foremost topics of general discussion. Does Sri Bhagavan give *diksha* to us and if not, why not?

IN THE EARLIER DAYS, the presence of Bhagavan was sought above all by people who desired liberation. Our ambitious aspirations saw no bounds in the grace of his presence. My intense feeling was, that whether there was significance or not in all these *dikshas* and initiations, if Sri Bhagavan was to give me initiation, it would be a blessing for me in any case. His pithy utterances were very cryptic, ever pregnant with meaning and power: "Who is the Guru? Who is the *sishya*? Who is to give and to whom? What is there to give? You think the 'Self' to be the body and take yet another body for the 'Guru' and demand the one to bless the other. Is the 'Guru' regarding the body as the 'Self'? There is neither Guru nor disciple other than the 'Self'. Guru is Self."

Though convinced by his presence and utterances, there yet remained a lurking sense of something missing and unfulfilled. It was at that time that I had an extraordinary experience which left an impress on my whole being. It was neither a dream nor a waking state experience. I was perfectly alive to it and aware of its permeating nature, which consumed and overpowered me. After the experience, I immediately wrote the following in a notebook and later went to the Ashram. Reaching Sri Bhagavan's presence before dusk, I left my notebook with him for his perusal.

This was the record:

18th November, 1939, 3:00 a.m.

It was an apparent dream. I was in a huge quadrangle of some college buildings. I was studying when I suddenly saw that Sri Bhagavan had come down, youthful and vigorous in appearance, and had the impression that he was going to manifest himself and speak. Oh, it was a wonderful sight. Thousands of people gathered round at a distance encircling Bhagavan, perched on all walls, upper floors and any available space around. I saw Dandapani sitting at a distance echoing Sri Bhagavan's speech which was in turn echoed by another. It had never occurred to me that this would happen or that Sri Bhagavan would ever come here, and I, who was at a distance could not stand any separation. I darted towards Sri Bhagavan and embraced him with so firm a grip the like of which I have not the strength to do or achieve in physical consciousness. And Sri Bhagavan embraced me. In each other's embrace, we left the place. At once I found him in my house. First welcoming Sri Bhagavan was my mother, more robust than she ever was in life. Then my father, calm and unperturbed as he always was, followed by my sister. Sri Bhagavan had a cold bath, myself pouring pots of water over him. Then in a few moments he went up and down our house throwing us all in confusion, but I alone followed him without a second thought. By this time my

mother appeared to be losing her confidence and faith. In the midst of this embarrassment, and in her presence, Sri Bhagavan appeared to put me to the test, as it were, and asked me, pointing to my sacred thread and other things: "What is all this! Now I say, throw, throw them away and I shall give you this." He was holding in his hands a bunch of *darba* (kusa grass) and I did not perceive how it came into his hands. At first I hesitated for a moment to discard my sacred thread for kusa grass, but a moment's reflection made me surrender to his will and with all vehemence I tore off the sacred thread and flung it on the ground, to the dismay of my mother and perplexity of my father. Immediately, Sri Bhagavan gave me two handfuls of kusa grass in a 'horseshoe' shape, and the moment I touched and received them a great serenity pervaded my entire being. Just then I experienced a descent of dynamic force into my being, flowing as it were from and through the *sahasrara*, permeating downwards slowly to the heart-centre, at which moment I felt apprehensive that my physical frame could not withstand this permeation and impact any more without jeopardy.

With courage and determination I looked up at Sri Bhagavan to ask him what all this was about. There was no answer, but I saw Sri Bhagavan's form change into the shape of Sri Rama and tell me something that I could not catch. So I asked, "Who are you?" and the reply was "I am Sri Rama, Sri Rama," whereupon this vision disappeared and I saw Sri Bhagavan in its place.

My mother began to cry aloud, having lost her balance of mind by this time, and said, "I will die, I will die, thinking I fell a prey to Sri Bhagavan's lures."

The mention of death caused irrepressible laughter in me, and Sri Bhagavan said at once, "Yes, die; you should die." When Sri Bhagavan said so, I turned around to my mother and with ferocity cried out, "Yes, die! Die!"

She was rolling on the ground when Sri Bhagavan asked me, "What is the earliest train to Bombay and the cheapest route?" He said he had to go there and to one or two more places, and then go on a tour in the north. I was thinking how best to take Sri Bhagavan and go with him when I felt completely awake and began reflecting on the event. Did it have any significance or was it merely a dream phenomenon?

As usual, the following morning I entered the Old Hall. Sri Bhagavan's welcome nod and penetrating look overwhelmed me, and even as I was halfway through doing my obeisance he turned to the shelf beside him, took out the notebook and handed it to me. Immediately he began, "Don't you know what Madhavan did? One day he was massaging my limbs. Leaving him to his job I reclined, closing my eyes. After some time I felt some variation in the friction, so I opened my eyes and saw him with his head bent down clutching my feet in his hands. I asked, 'What are you doing?' 'Nothing,' he replied, resuming his task. He took it as *diksha* by the feet."

Immediately I said that I had had an unusual experience by Sri Bhagavan's touch, which stirred my being, though in a dreamy condition, and asked if initiation or *diksha* could be had in this way also and whether these were real and effective regardless of the *swapna* (dream) state? Sri Bhagavan slowly spoke, interspersed with short intervals of silent gaze: "*Jagrat* and *swapna* are states that come and go. If these states are real they must be unchanging, permanent. Our real nature is constant being. It never changes. Be it *upadesa* or *diksha*, the efficacy of the Guru's influence or God's grace is not conditioned by the different states. The influence is an experience being itself. Guru, God and Self are one and the same. So long as the Guru, God or the Self are deemed external, all *upadesa*, initiation and the several *dikshas* mentioned have a relative meaning and significance. But 'Guru' is external and internal, and is the very Self. Such influence is efficacious whether the experience is in the *jagrat* or *swapna* states"

—This article and the following two have been reproduced from early editions of the Mountain Path *magazine.*

The Mahatma and The Maharshi

By K. Arunachalam

THIS HAPPENED in the summer of 1932. I was working in those days with a group of young men in the slums of Bangalore under the leadership of Brahmachari Ramachandra. He suggested that I should visit Sri Ramana Maharshi on my way back from Madurai. I had been to my village in Madurai district for a brief visit and I was returning to Bangalore to resume my work in the Gandhi School run by the Deena Seva Sangh.

Tiruvannamalai, the abode of the Maharshi, is not on my regular route. So I had to go to Villupuram and change trains. Tiruvannamali is a midway station on the Villupuram/Katpadi line. I got down at the Tiruvannamalai station and went to the famous Arunachaleswara Temple.

To my surprise I found there a *sannyasi* spinning on the *Charkha* in one of the *mandapams* within the precincts of the temple. I stood in front of him for a considerably long time. Spinning was common in those days. Anyone who was politically conscious spun either with a *charkha* or with a *takli*. But for one who has renounced the joys and sorrows of the world in favour of God-realisation, to be spinning was something beyond my comprehension. Furthermore, this *sannyasi*, dressed in *khadi gerua* cloth, was using a pedal-*charkha*, and that was why I stood in front of him in great amazement. Later on I came to know that this *sannyasi* was one of the disciples of the Maharshi.

After a while I made enquiry about Ramana Ashram. This institution solely built around the Maharshi was not as famous then as it grew to be in the forties and thereafter. I was shown the way and walked along the road under the shadow of the Arunachala Mountain.

I reached the Ashram and met the person in charge of arrangements. He showed me a place where I could keep my things and stay. After the necessary formalities — they were simple enough — I entered the hall in which the Maharshi was seated on a sofa. In another corner of the hall, there was cupboard on top of which I saw an eighteen inch statue of Mahatma Gandhi (with a *khadi* yarn garland). I sat in front of the Maharshi along with several others. Some of the devotees were seated in *ardha-padmasana* in meditation. A few were reading silently some religious literature. The Maharshi himself was in *samadhi*. Some were reciting *slokas* in a soft melodious tone. On the whole the atmosphere was an elevating one.

I sat in silence for hours together. When it was time for the night meal all the devotees got up and walked toward the adjoining dining hall. I also went with them. The hall was divided by a cloth curtain. On one side of the curtain some of the orthodox devotees sat for their meal. On the other side were all the nonorthodox. The Maharshi sat in a place visible to one and all, for he did not differentiate between man and man. This was a great lesson to me. After the meal some of us went back to the hall and sat there. Occasionally the Maharshi would say something which was not quite audible and the scribe sitting by his side would write it down. I decided to sleep in the hall as some others did. I could not sleep because I was inquisitive to know what the Maharshi would do. He got up from the sofa at 3 o'clock in the morning and walked towards the tank. After ablutions he had a dip in the pond. He changed his *khadi kaupeenam* (loincloth) and washing the used one left it outside to dry. After doing all this, he walked back into the hall and sat as usual on the sofa. Sometimes he reclined on the sofa and dosed off. Early in the morning the Maharshi got up, went into the kitchen and joined the group that was cutting vegetables. He supervised the breakfast and ate with the visitors and ashramites.

During the day there was a stream of visitors who went near the Maharshi and prostrated before him. Sometimes he opened his eyes and blessed them with a smile. Occasionally he spoke a few words. When the daily newspaper arrived it was placed near him. He glanced through the pages and put it aside. Most of the time his eyes remained half closed. There was a calm peace in the whole environment that surpassed all understanding. I sat silently watching and enjoying the holy presence of the Maharshi. After spending a full three days like this, I wanted to take leave of the Maharshi and go to Bangalore. I was waiting for an opportunity.

The Maharshi opened his eyes. I got up and prostrated myself before him and requested him to clear a doubt of mine. He showed his willingness by

a broad smile. Taking courage I posed the following problem: "The Maharshi by his example directs his followers to keep quiet, but Mahatma Gandhi whose statue is here, by his own example, goads everyone to be continuously active. I am puzzled as to whom to follow." The Maharshi's face broadened with an unparalleled smile. He asked, "Who told you that I am sitting quiet?" I replied in all humility that I had seen this with my own eyes. He said, " Why do you think that what you are seeing with your physical eyes is the truth?" I had no answer for this question.

Once again I repeated the question as to whom to follow? Then he enquired about what I was doing. I gave him an idea of the slum-settlement work in Bangalore and told him how we were intensively engaged in *Harijan* uplift and prohibition work. He blessed the work and asked me to continue this work in the manner which Mahatma Gandhi wanted such work done, i.e., with great devotion and detachment. I was given a set of Ashram publications to be used by the workers. I asked the Maharshi for his autograph. He did not agree, but requested the Sarvadhikari who was standing nearby to write my name. The Maharshi immediately said, "How can Arunachalam have a father?" and he laughed.

I stood in his presence for how long I don't know. When I regained my consciousness I took leave of him and left for Bangalore.

In 1951-52 I was in the USA. While touring the Southern States, I came in touch with a group of whites who were deeply involved in the desegregation movement. They did not differentiate between man and man, whether black or white. I found in the study of the leader of this group a photo of Sri Ramana Maharshi whom he had never seen. He revealed that it was the Maharshi's teaching that was the driving force in all his activities undertaken for bringing about equality between the two races—the Whites and the Negroes. He evinced a deep interest in the Maharshi's mode of Self-enquiry for Self-realisation. Now I understood the true import of the *Gita* teaching: "He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men; he is a yogi, who has accomplished all action."

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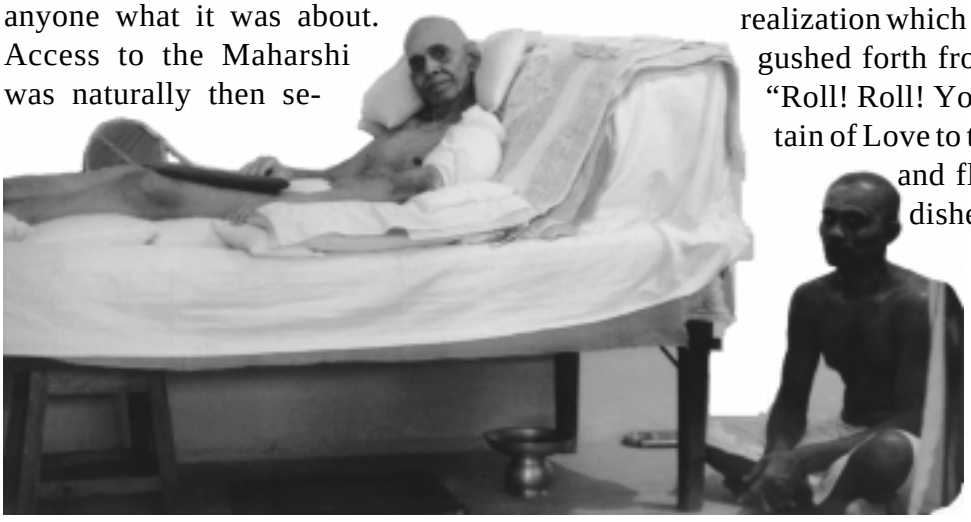
The Great Event

R. Narayana Iyer

The following was written by the author just months after the Maha Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan.

"Before some stars appear, light appears. After they vanish from vision, light alone remains. That is the state of a *jnani*—his birth and death." These were the words of Sri Bhagavan in a talk about *Jnanis*. The exact import of the words is as puzzling as the strange phenomenon that passed vividly before our eyes on the 14th April, 1950. It was about a quarter to nine at night. I was sitting in the open space in front of my house facing east. The sky was clear, the air still. A grave and subdued solemnity pervaded the atmosphere as though reflecting the anxiety of so many sincere devotees of the Maharshi who had come to Tiruvannamalai on account of his illness.

Suddenly a bright and luminous body arose from the southern horizon, slowly went up and descended in the north, somewhere on Arunachala Hill. It was not a meteor as it was bigger than what Venus looks to our vision, and its movement was slow. It was so lustrous that at its zenith the light shed by its trail stretched all the way back to the horizon like an arc. The sight dazed me. Instinctively, as it were, I jumped to my feet and ran as fast as I could to the Ashram, a hundred yards off. There was a crowd of people moving about and quite a hustle and bustle. It didn't strike me to enquire of anyone what it was about. Access to the Maharshi was naturally then selective and restricted to a few. I cared not for the Ashram rules and regulations, but like a tethered calf let loose and running to its mother, I took a short cut, jumped into the garden, scaled the parapet and rushed into the room where the Maharshi, Bhagavan, my Ramana, Guru, Father, God in flesh and blood was lying.



Lo! My heart thumped; breath choked. He was no longer in the flesh and blood. He had just breathed his last. As the star descended on the Hill, he had left the body. It was held in *padmasana* position by the attendants. I touched the body. There was no warmth. In a frenzy I clasped hold of his hand, the mere touch of which used to give the thrill of eternity. Coldness of death froze my nerves. All was over like a dream. Sobs, hymns and chantings filled the air, and my head reeled with dizzy thoughts.

We will no longer see our dear Bhagavan in that beautiful form of molten gold, which charmed and enchanted us for decades! We will no longer see those compassionate eyes that gleamed like twin stars, peered into our innermost depths and dispelled the shadows that blurred our vision and understanding! No more that kind and godly look of Grace that solaced our wearied souls and inspired our depressed hearts in speechless silence with peace unbounded, or that bewitching and enchanting radiant smile that fascinated us and drew us to him, to heights of bliss, far, far above this world. No more could we hear that sweet and ringing voice, the talks of sparkling wit and humour, or those words of profound wisdom from the depths of deep realization which intellect could not fathom! Tears gushed forth from my eyes as from a fountain. "Roll! Roll! You beads of Love, from the fountain of Love to the Ocean of Love!" It is not fruit and flowers, nor sweets and savoury dishes that can be offered at Thy feet any more. The only oblation that would reach Thee are tears of love from that perennial spring that is the core of our Being, of which you are the Source in your disembodied fullness. The Divine *Leela* is over.

Letters and Comments

I was wondering if someone could help clarify a confusion I have over one of Ramana's points.

He states that we are not the doers.... Yet, if we are not the doers, then who is, if all is one consciousness?

I have heard from the Advaita side that because we are not the doers, then apparently we are not responsible for our actions.... How can this not be a harmful teaching? Haven't all the religions and countless masters encouraged people to act in loving ways?

I would really appreciate any guidance what-soever. Thank you and blessings to you...

An American Seeker

The teaching is correct: "We are not the doers." But as long as we live an ego-centered life we are unable to experience the truth of this teaching and will have to suffer the consequences of our actions. That is called the Law of Karma.

Once we completely surrender to the Higher Power, or completely efface the ego by Self-enquiry and realize the Self, we know for certain that we are not the doer. It is an ever-present experience. Up to this point we must make effort to realize the truth that we cannot, in fact, make any efforts, that we are only tools in the the hands of the Higher Power. Such are the contradictions in verbalizing spiritual truths.

No true teacher will ever say you are not responsible for your actions. Only when individuality is lost, when we are fixed in the realization of the One Reality, are we not responsible for our actions. In that state there is no one but the Higher Power to be responsible.

Editor

Could you please, if you have time, answer the following questions:

1. Besides asking and yearning for Grace, what are the major ostacles we need to remove to be able to receive It?

2. In my earlier years, ultimate salvation seemed a sure thing once all the earthly puzzles are resolved. Now I live in that future with all the puzzles still in place and I have no excuses left.

3. Is there a membership requirement at the Ashram for someone like me, some distance away? What are the rules? How can I be a part?

Oregon, USA

1. The very fact that one yearns for 'Grace' is the surest sign of the presence of Grace in one's life. Multiplicity of thoughts alone obstruct the reality of the ever-present Grace.

2. All the puzzles in life have no actual foundation other than thought. They do not occur to you in your deep sleep. Simply make the effort to still your thoughts and you will very soon see that all obstacles and puzzles have somehow evaporated.

3. There are no membership requirements for this Ashram; in fact, everyone is a member. As no one is separate from the all-pervading Self, no one falls outside the realm of this Ashram dedicated to the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. By remembering the true meaning and purpose of life, by turning inward towards the Source of awareness, one can truly feel they are not only part of this Ashram, but one with all creation.

Editor

Namaste! I recently read a dialogue with the Master Sri Ramana that described a very simple method to liberation based on the realization that we are ONE with GOD. However, when I did research into the life of the Master, I found a lot of rituals, and still note significant rituals at his Ashram in South India. Have I missed something here, or did the Master promote his simple, direct teachings shortly before his physical death?

American Seeker

Yes, you missed something.

The Master is seated on the very top of the spiritual mountain. He sees seekers approaching that summit from all sides and by various pathways. He does not discourage anyone from climbing. That is, in fact, what we should be doing; it is the purpose of this human existence. Aspirants may use different aids to help them climb. The aid may be a ritual, may be japa, may be pranayama or disinterested service. Some may take directly to Self-enquiry. He encourages all, as the goal is the same for all—the summit.

We should apply ourselves to the practice of the teachings. That is the essential thing. We must make the mind one-pointed and turn it within. "Know the Self and all is known," he tells. Take up the spiritual practice that appeals to you most. Be sincere and persevere throughout your whole life, if necessary. Everything will become right in the end and success is assured.

Editor

Observing the 51st Aradhana in New York City

"In Sri Bhagavan's vicinity the mind's distractions were overpowered by an austere and potent calmness and the unique bliss of peace was directly experienced. This I would call Ramana Lahari, 'the blissful atmosphere of Ramana'. In this ecstasy of grace one loses one's sense of separate individuality and there remains something grand and all-pervading, all-devouring. This indeed is the spirit of Arunachala which swallows up the whole universe by its gracious effulgence."

THE CELEBRATION of Sri Bhagavan's 51st Aradhana took place at 11 a.m., Saturday, April 21st at Arunachala Ashrama on Clyde Street in Rego Park, New York City. Shortly after the program I heard the above words of Swami Viswanathan read one early morning in the Ashram. I felt that Sri Bhagavan had indeed given to this beloved disciple the gift to express the ecstatic bliss of His Presence which had pervaded every aspect of the Aradhana celebration and seemed to linger for days afterwards.

The Ashram appeared to be bulging at the seams with devotees, many of whom had traveled long distances. On this bright spring morning, friends old and friends new converged, some from distant Vermont, Maryland or Colorado! There was an overflow of fresh flowers, of trees in blossom, a new life emerging from a winter pause, affirming the reality that the body is not 'I' — that life must triumph over the illusion of death! Of course, nothing could have confirmed this more than the experience of 'Ramana Lahari' which infused the atmosphere.

The celebration began with the chant of "The 108 Names of Sri Bhagavan" composed by Swami Viswanathan, as children offered flower petals at the sacred shrine. Dennis Hartel welcomed all and read a most inspiring story of Sri Bhagavan's *aradhana* day (see page 5), which described the descent of the comet over the Holy Hill at the moment of His leaving the body. All enjoyed immensely two excerpts from the yet-to-be-released interview video, *Guru Ramana - His Living Presence*, in which two Professors, Prof. T. N. Krishnamurti Aiyer and Prof K. Swaminathan, tell their unforgettable experiences with Sri Maharshi.

Sriram Panchu, a lawyer representing devotees interested in preserving the sanctity of the Arunachala Hill and its surroundings, brought the congregation up to date regarding the case before the courts in Madras.

Bhajans and the recitation of Sri Ramana Maharshi's compositions ensued with enthusiastic participation, followed by Vedic recitations and *Aarati*.

Food preparations, a veritable feast, which included *iddlies* and *sambar*, was enjoyed immensely by all.

Chants and bhajans continued to resound the sanctuary throughout the afternoon and evening as people lingered on, enjoying the good will of fellow devotees in silence, song and speech, amidst the atmosphere of the infectious bliss of Sri 'Ramana Lahari'.

Words cannot express the profound gratitude we feel for the blessing of the living presence of our Divine Teacher who communicates by silence the assurance "Where can I go? I am always here." On this day, in the company of devotees and friends, gathered to remember His Living Presence, we experienced this all the more.

—Evelyn K. Saphier

The Children's Ashrama in Nova Scotia

This year the Children's Ashrama at the Bridgetown, Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama is scheduled to commence on Sunday, August 19th and continue for five days. Those parents who wish to have their children participate, or desire more information, please call Darlene in Nova Scotia (902-665-2263) or the New York Ashrama (718-575-3215).

The *MAHARSHI* is a free bimonthly newsletter edited by Dennis Hartel and Dr. Anil Sharma and distributed in North America by Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. For those with Internet access, this issue and all back issues are available at "http://www.ramana-maharshi.org/publish/newslet2.htm". For information on books, videos, audio CDs and tapes on Sri Ramana Maharshi go to: "http//www.arunachala.org".